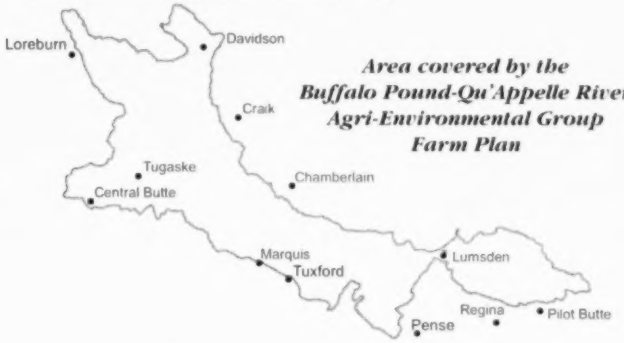
BUFFALO POUND-QU'APPELLE RIVER WATERSHED NEWS

Highlighting the Buffalo Pound-Qu'Appelle River Agri-Environmental Group Farm Plan — March 2007 Issue

The Buffalo Pound-Qu'Appelle River Agri-Environmental Group Farm Plan

Buffalo Pound-Qu'Appelle River area producers are taking advantage of a new program that addresses agricultural activities that can impact water quality.



The Buffalo Pound-Qu'Appelle River Agri-Environmental Group Farm Plan can help you make changes that benefit both the management of your farm and the environment, particularly water resources. With the Group Farm Plan, you can have hands-on, one-on-one advice and assistance from local advisor Brett Gaube, who will help you make a management plan for your farm or ranch, explain how you can access funding through the Group Farm Plan, and provide expertise from start to finish on your projects. The Group Farm Plan is part of the Canada-Saskatchewan Farm Stewardship Program.

The Group Farm Plan allows producers to work together on a priority issue relating to agriculture, and implement two Beneficial Management Practices which address it. Protecting surface water has been made a top priority.

Beneficial Management Practices covered by the Buffalo Pound-Qu'Appelle River Agri-Environmental Group Farm Plan

1. Wintering Site Management

These practices may assist producers in reducing the risks of nutrients and pathogens that may enter surface water from wintering cattle within confined feeding areas. Since each livestock operation functions differently depending on herd size, land base, accessibility to water, shelter and feed, the Group Farm Plan advisor will help you choose from one or a combination of wintering feeding techniques such as swath grazing, bale grazing or stock piled forages.

Wintering site management practices include:

- Establishing shelterbelts
- Building portable shelters and windbreaks
- Installing alternative winter watering systems
- Improving field access and upgrading alleyways/access lanes
- Modifying existing fences

Under the Group Farm Plan, wintering site management projects are cost-shared at 50 per cent to a maximum of $15,000 until March 31, 2008.

2. Riparian Area Management

These practices provide producers with assistance to implement practices that will protect and enhance riparian areas on their farm or ranch. Riparian areas are the lands adjacent to streams, rivers, lakes and wetlands, where the vegetation and soils are strongly influenced by the presence of water. Under good management, riparian areas are productive, reliable producers of forage, can provide shelter for wildlife and breeding areas for fish, and will enhance water quality and quantity.

Riparian area management practices include:

- Installing alternative watering systems to manage livestock within the riparian area
- Establishing riparian buffers: planting of non-invasive forages, shrubs, and trees
- Fencing to manage grazing and improve riparian condition and function
- Grazing management in surrounding uplands - including cross fencing for rotational, seasonal, rest, swath and extended grazing systems
- Improving stream crossings

Under the Group Farm Plan, riparian area management projects are cost-shared at 50 per cent to a maximum of $20,000 until March 31, 2008.

Source Water Protection Initiatives Underway in the Upper Qu'Appelle River Watershed

Producers in the Upper Qu'Appelle River Watershed learned about protecting source water during an information meeting held in Tugaske in late January.

Brett Gaube

Bob Parker

Robin Tod

Riparian Health Assessment

The event included a presentation about a Riparian Health Assessment report. Conducted along the Qu'Appelle River, key findings of the report revealed the poor health of some riparian areas along the river. The assessment included key factors that impact riparian areas such as: construction; cattle activity; soil texture, which can lead to erosion; soil salinity, which can lead to great reductions in plant growth and potential erosion; and the quantity of invasive species. In order to address common problems such as erosion, sedimentation, and excessive plant growth, the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority provided details on the status of the Upper Qu'Appelle Conveyance Improvement Project.

Conveyance Improvement Project

The Upper Qu'Appelle Conveyance Improvement Project is designed to increase the conveyance capacity to a maximum discharge of 17 cubic metres. The design flow is aimed to meet peak demands for municipal, irrigation, industrial, wildlife and recreational purposes for the next 30 year period. Most of the improvements are proposed in the upper 32 kilometre reach of the channel which was originally constructed about 40 years ago.

"The Conveyance Improvement Project is intended to improve the channel stability and the conveyance capacity, as well as incorporate measures to maintain and where practical, improve the health of adjacent riparian areas and the river ecosystem," said Bob Parker, Manager of Project Engineering with the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority.

Watershed Planning

An update on watershed planning activities in the Upper Qu'Appelle River Watershed was also provided by Robin Tod, Manager, Watershed Planning Coordination with the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority. Work continues on a Source Water Protection Plan for the watershed. Local Watershed Advisory Committees have been developing the Plan which reflects local interests and objectives from the different organizations involved in regards to protecting the quality and quantity of source water in the watershed.

Group Farm Plan

Attendees also learned about the many benefits of Group Farm Plans, which address on-farm environmental risks. Group Farm Plan Advisor Brett Gaube explained the details of the program, which provides producers with financial and technical assistance in implementing a selected number of Beneficial Management Practices that benefit both the producer and the environment, particularly water resources. The two Beneficial Management Practices offered through the Group Farm Plan are wintering site management and riparian area management.

"Time is running out to apply for the Group Farm Plan," said Gaube. "I encourage all producers to go through the Plan as soon as possible, otherwise you may miss out on excellent funding opportunities available to make your farm more environmentally sound."

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